

**Amendments to the Claims:** This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A support for apparatus such as optical or photographic apparatus including a tripod having a spider with a seat extending through the spider, the support comprising:

a pillar having a stem and being arranged to receive the apparatus at a first end and to be housed with its stem in the seat extending through the spider of the tripod, the pillar being structurally independent of the spider and capable of being inserted removably in the seat and being slidable therein; and

an orientable platform located at the first end of the pillar for the levelling of the apparatus independently of the positioning of the tripod, the orientable platform having a first ball and socket joint including a ball ~~and a socket~~ fixed firmly to a fixing plate of the platform and a socket fixed firmly to the stem of the pillar, ~~respectively, or vice-versa,~~ and a tie rod acting between the socket and the ball in order, when tensioned, to prevent relative rotation thereof, the tie rod extending through the stem of the pillar and being operated by a knob associated with a second end of the pillar remote from the first end.

2. (Currently Amended) A support for apparatus such as optical or photographic apparatus including a tripod having a spider with a seat extending through the spider, the support comprising:

a pillar having a stem and being arranged to receive the apparatus at a first end and to be housed with its stem in the seat extending through the spider of the tripod, the pillar being structurally independent of the spider and capable of being inserted removably in the seat and being slidable therein; and

an orientable platform located at the first end of the pillar for the levelling of the apparatus independently of the positioning of the tripod, the orientable platform having a first ball and socket joint including a ball fixed firmly to the system of the pillar and a socket

fixed firmly to a fixing plate of the platform, and a tie rod acting between the socket and the ball in order, when tensioned, to prevent relative rotation thereof, the tie rod extending through the stem of the pillar and being operated by a knob associated with a second end of the pillar, remote from the first end. The support according to claim 1 further comprising a level mechanism associated with the plate.

3. (Currently Amended) The support according to claim 1 or claim 2 further comprising a fixing mechanism for a head for the orientable support of the apparatus is associated with the plate.

4. (Previously Presented) The support according to claim 3 in which the fixing mechanism comprises at least one screw coupling which can clamp the head or apparatus against the fixing plate and at least one grub screw which can preload the fixing mechanism between the plate and the head or apparatus.

5. (Currently Amended) The support according to claim 1 or claim 2 in which the knob is screwed onto the tie rod by operative actuation of the knob.

6. (Previously Presented) The support according to claim 5 in which the knob is associated removably with the tie rod in order to be removed for the purpose of the removal of the pillar from the seat in the spider and its insertion therein.

7. (Currently Amended) The support according to claim 1 or claim 2 further comprising a small plate, removable with the knob, interposed between the knob and the pillar and projecting radially from the pillar in order to prevent the pillar from accidentally slipping out of the seat.

8. (Previously Presented) The support according to claim 7 in which the small plate is fixed firmly to the female thread of the knob.

9. (Currently Amended) The support according to claim 1 or claim 2 further comprising preloading means provided on the tie rod for ensuring a friction load in the first ball and socket joint when the tie rod is slackened.

10. (Currently Amended) A tripod including a support according to claim 1 or claim 2 in which locking means is provided between the spider and the pillar for locking the pillar in the seat, in an adjustable position along the stem.

11. (Previously Presented) The tripod according to claim 10 in which the locking means comprises a brake mounted in the spider.

12. (Previously Presented) The tripod according to claim 10 in which the shape of the stem of the pillar and of the seat in the spider is such as to provide a non-rotatable guided coupling of the pillar in the spider.

13. (Previously Presented) A support for apparatus such as optical or photographic apparatus, the support comprising:

a tripod having a spider with a seat extending through the spider;

a pillar having a stem and being arranged to receive the apparatus at a first end and to be housed with its stem in the seat extending through the spider of the tripod, the pillar being structurally independent of the spider and capable of being inserted removably in the seat and being slidable therein;

an orientable platform located at the first end of the pillar for the levelling of the apparatus independently of the positioning of the tripod, the orientable platform having a first ball and socket joint including a ball and a socket fixed firmly to a fixing plate of the platform and to the stem of the pillar, respectively, or vice versa, and a tie rod acting between the socket and the ball in order, when tensioned, to prevent relative rotation thereof, the tie rod extending through the stem of the pillar and being operated by a knob associated with a second end of the pillar remote from the first end;

a level mechanism associated with the plate;

a fixing mechanism for a head for the orientable support of the apparatus associated with the plate;

a small plate, removable with the knob, interposed between the knob and the pillar and projecting radially from the pillar in order to prevent the pillar from accidentally slipping out of the seat; and

preloading means provided on the tie rod for ensuring a friction load in the first ball and socket joint when the tie rod is slackened.

14. (Previously Presented) The support according to claim 13 in which the fixing mechanism comprises at least one screw coupling which can clamp the head or apparatus against the fixing plate and at least one grub screw which can preload the fixing mechanism between the plate and the head or apparatus.

15. (Currently Amended) The support according to claim 1 or claim 2 in which the knob is screwed onto the tie rod by operative actuation of the knob.

16. (Previously Presented) The support according to claim 15 in which the knob is associated removably with the tie rod in order to be removed for the purpose of the removal of the pillar from the seat in the spider and its insertion therein.

17. (Previously Presented) The support according to claim 16 in which the small plate is fixed firmly to the female thread of the knob.

18. (Previously Presented) The support according to claim 13 further comprising locking means provided between the spider and the pillar for locking the pillar in the seat, in an adjustable position along the stem.

19. (Previously Presented) The support according to claim 18 in which the locking means comprises a brake mounted in the spider.

20. (Previously Presented) The support according to claim 18 in which the shape of the stem of the pillar and of the seat in the spider is such as to provide a non-rotatable guided coupling of the pillar in the spider.

21. (New) The support according to claim 1 or claim 2 further comprising a level mechanism associated with the plate.